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## *Vowing to Vote Democratic Next Time? Here's Some of the Talent in the Room*

### By The Editors

Aside from emerging from the bunker to vote the war appropriation the US congress pretty much disappeared from the radar screen during the war; even more invisible than Saddam Hussein who at least appeared briefly before a crowd in Beirut in the first week of April.

True, there were some occasional noises of outrage from Senators Byrd and Kennedy and a belated and oddly timed outburst from Daschle, but otherwise Democrats, even those who had opposed the war, behaved like their House leader, Nancy Pelosi, who took roughly the same position as Dennis Kucinich on abortion: she opposed it, but would do nothing to stand in its way.

What of the Democratic candidates vying for the honor of running against G. Bush in 2004? Senators Lieberman, Edwards, Graham, Kerry and Rep Gephardt all supported the war with varying degrees of enthusiasm. Most bellicose were Lieberman and Graham, both of whom urged Bush not to pass up the chance to attack Syria and Iran. Lieberman was rewarded soon thereafter by an article in The Forward reporting that he's not hauling in Jewish money in significant

(**Dems** *continued on page 9*)

## *A Special Double Issue on the Iraq War*

# The Thirteen Years War

### by Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St. Clair

### Part One

The "war", officially designated by the US government as such and inaugurated with the "decapitation" strike of March 19, 2003 was really only a change of tempo in the overall war on Iraq, commenced with the sanctions imposed by the UN and by a separate US blockade in August of 1990, stretching through the first "hot" attack January 16, 1991 on through the next twelve years. 1990-2003: a long war, and a terrible one for the Iraqi people.

On April 3, 1991, the UN Security Council approved Resolution 687, the so-called mother of all resolutions, setting up the sanctions committee, dominated by the United States.

It is vital to understand that the first "hot" Gulf War was waged as much against the people of Iraq as against the Republican Guard. The US and its allies destroyed Iraq's water, sewage and water-purification systems and electrical grid. Nearly every bridge across the Tigris and Euphrates was demolished. They struck 28 hospitals and destroyed 38 schools. They hit all eight of Iraq's large hydropower dams. They attacked grain storage silos and irrigation systems.

Farmlands near Basra were inundated with saltwater from allied attacks. More than 95 percent of Iraq's poultry farms were destroyed, as were 3.5 million sheep and more than 2 million cows. They bombed textile plants, cement factories and oil refineries, pipelines and storage facilities, all of which contributed to an environmental and economic nightmare that has continued nearly unabated over the 12 years.

When confronted by the press with reports of Iraqi women carting home buckets of filthy water from the Tigris River, itself contaminated with raw sewage from the bombed treatment plants, an American general shrugged his shoulders and said, "People say, 'You didn't recognize that the bombing was going to have an effect on water and sewage.' Well, what were we trying to do with sanctions: help out the Iraqi people? What we were doing with the attacks on the infrastructure was to accelerate the effect of the sanctions."

After this first "hot" war in early 1991, with Iraq's civilian and military infrastructure in ruins, the sanctions returned, as an invisible army of what we could call "external occupation", with a vise grip: the intent was to keep Iraq from rebuilding not only its army but the foundations of its economy and society.

Despite the efforts of outfits such as Voices in the Wilderness, embargoes don't draw the same attention as salvoes of cruise missiles or showers of cluster bombs. But they're infinitely more deadly and the perpetrators and executives deserve to end up on trial as war criminals, as surely as any targeting officer in the Pentagon.

By 1998, UN officials working Baghdad were arguing that the root cause of child mortality and other health problems was no longer simply lack of food and medicine but lack of clean water (freely available in all parts of Iraq prior to the Gulf War) and of electrical power, now running at only 30 percent

(**War** *continued on page 5)*

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# Our Little Secrets

## Eerie Similarity

Gore Vidal asks, "Don't you think Senator Kerry is looking more like Lincoln every day," pause… "after Lincoln was assassinated."

## Seeds of Peace; Flowers of Evil

We direct your attention to a group called Seeds of Peace. This lofty sounding outfit, based in Washington, purports to bring together young people from conflict-torn regions of the world and inculcate in them the virtues of peacemaking. It's a kind of summer camp in the woods of Maine for aspiring diplomats from Israel, Yemen, Kosovo and Afghanistan.

The organization was founded by John Wallach in 1993, in the wake of the first bombing of the World Trade Center. Wallach was a journalist for the Hearst Syndicate, who reported on Vietnam and the Iran/Contra scandal, a Washington insider, with many friends in the State Department. Wallach died last year.

The group is now run by Aaron David Miller, an old State Department hand who worked in the Intelligence Office and served as senior adviser for Arab-Israeli Negotiations. Each year Seeds of Peace hosts a swank gala in New York to plug their work and raise money. This year the event was held on April 27 at Avery Fisher Hall in Lincoln Center and featured scenes from Broadway plays, dances by Twyla Tharp, songs from Billy Joel and a sermon from Queen Rania Al-Abdullah of Jordan. Tickets for the event ran at $250.

The big moment of the evening came when the organization handed out its annual humanitarian award to… the envelope please… Thomas Pickering! Who? Yes, that Tom Pickering, the longtime fixture at the State Department, spitting image of Donald Pleasance, and protege of Henry Kissinger. As a peace seedling, Pickering is a very odd choice indeed. Twelve years ago, as US ambassador to the United Nations, Pickering manuevered the UN into supporting war on Iraq and, subsequently, into imposing the terrible sanctions regime that has only now come to its bloody denouement.

Pickering's career of diplomatic infamy stretches from El Salvador to Russia, with stops in Sri Lanka, Nigeria, India and Israel. He served as the State Department's Deputy Director of the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs during the Vietnam War. But his most nefarious work was done in the Americas.

In the 1970s, working at Kissinger's elbow, Pickering helped plot the overthrow of Allende's government in Chile. In the 1980s, he served as Ambassador to El Salvador during the Reagan administration, when death squads, operating under the auspices of the CIA, stained that country with rivers of blood.

Recently declassified State Department documents show that in 1985 Pickering was briefed by the Salvadoran Defense Minister that top military officials had ordered the murders of three nuns and a lay worker in 1980. This conversation took place at a time when the U.S. government was claiming that no high ranking officers were involved in the slayings. Pickering kept the information to himself and the Reagan administration continued to deny any high level involvement in the murder of the nuns.

Instead of being run from office or put in the dock before an international tribunal, Pickering's career flourished. He soon rose to the level of "Career Ambassador", the highest rank in the United States Foreign Service.

Then for Clinton he oversaw the development and implementation of Plan Colombia, the war on Colombian peasants being carried out under the banner of drug interdiction. Pickering retired from the State Department after the 2000 elections. But he didn't head to the putting green. Instead, he landed at Boeing as the senior vice president for International Relations. Yes, that Boeing. The company that builds the cruise missile, the JDAM bomb and the Stealth bomber.

We shouldn't be shocked that Seeds of Peace, little more than an outpost of the State Department, feted someone with so bloody a track record. After all, only last year Seeds of Peace bestowed a similar honor on Madeleine Albright, fresh off the war on Serbia. Albright was an old friend of John Wallach, who sold her antiques from his fashionable DC store when she taught at Georgetown.

Giving Thomas Pickering an award as a peacemaker makes about as much sense as calling cruise missiles humanitarian bombs. Seeds of Peace. Flowers of Evil.

## Dollars and Euros

Suddenly it's the Euro, bulging large in leftish scenarios of why Bush attacked Iraq. Saddam demanded Euros for oil, not dollars. Bush's real enemy is the Euro, threat to US supremacy if it ever becomes the world's reserve currency. Why, if Britain hooked into the Euro, America's decline would loom.

In other words, the world would trust a bunch of German bankers to run a tighter ship than Alan Greenspan. We asked Robert Brenner, author of The Boom and the Bubble, for his thoughts.

Brenner: "I think there is some sense to this, but limited. The main point is this: due to a) the gigantic American current account deficit, b) the shaky state of US assets like stocks and real estate, as well as foreign direct investment, and c) growing US debt of all sorts.

"There is a strong tendency for the dollar to fall against other currencies, especially the Euro. The dollar has already fallen against the Euro by 20 per cent over the last year, and Europeans are leaving US assets (like stocks) in droves. This

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(**Serbia** *continued from page 1*)

could have catastrophic consequences for the US economy, as I have again and again emphasized in the stuff I've written. The dollar could fall forcing down value of assets, inducing people to leave US assets, pushing the dollar down further inducing further flight from US assets...a disastrous dollar/assets downward spiral.

"In this context, it makes sense that people don't want to value their assets—like oil—in dollars. If they continue to value in dollars, they will lose money for the simple reason that the dollar is falling, with result that for any given amount of say oil they get a dollar that can buy less. To the extent that people feel that the US government doesn't give a shit about the US economy, US debt, etc... they conclude there is even greater reason to think the dollar will fall, so naturally further reason to stop valuing assets like oil in dollars. This seems to me the rational core.

"As to the rest: I don't see the political motivation. If people thought the dollar was going to go up, they'd continue to value in dollars. Think of how well the oil producers did over the period roughly 95-01 as the dollar skyrocketed, raising their returns to oil sales accordingly."

## Re-educating Iraq

Iraqi's, newly liberated, are about to get a crash course in free enterprise and colonialist largesse.

That seems to be the approach as America begins awarding contracts for the country's reconstruction.

Among the first to see this new system at work will be Iraqi children. Fresh out of being scared out of their wits by the American blitzkrieg—and not a few of them minus the miscellaneous limb—Iraqi children will begin attending school again soon courtesy of Creative Associates International.

A Washington, D.C.-based, for-profit consultancy that has been doing education-related work for the government in some 60 countries, CAII just was awarded a $62 million contract by the U.S. Agency for International Development to handle the reopening of Iraq's schools,. The award makes CAII one of the first beneficiaries of the government's postwar reconstruction largesse.

Creative Associates International is also handling the USAID education effort in war-torn Afghanistan.

While Creative Associates hasn't said much about its plans, other than to report that it will make an effort to see that girls as well as boys attend school, it is likely to be playing the role of schools manager, handling everything from staffing to curriculum planning and book buying. Iraq, where education was handled centrally by the state for decades, has no tradition of local school boards.

It would be ironic if Iraq gets full-blown for-profit education at a time when for-profit management of schools in the U.S. is starting to look like a loser. Just as the U.S. shipped its toxic and carcinogenic pesticides off to Third World farmers after they were determined to be too dangerous for use in the U.S., it appears toxic education theories being rejected here are finding new export markets (can shop-worn economic and political theories be far behind?).

The largest for-profit education experiment in the nation, begun this year in Philadelphia at the insistence of then governor and now Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge, is floundering. Only in its second semester of operation, the experiment, which saw some 60 city schools turned over to management by several corporate management companies, including Edison Schools, as part of a state takeover of the city's school district, is already beginning to show warts and bruises. One company, Chancellor Beacon Academy, of Florida, is about to have its five schools taken away from it, following complaints by teachers that the company provided inadequate training and materials and failed to make any worthwhile improvements. Boston-based Edison, meanwhile, which has already been dumped by several other school districts around the country for failing to deliver on promises of improving educational results, and by several others for allegedly falsifying those results to make it appear as though it had been delivering, is in danger of having some of its 20 schools in Philadelphia taken out of its hands.

At least in Philadelphia there are civil authorities—the city government and local parent organizations, as well as the teachers union—all of them skeptical about corporate management of schools, who can monitor the behavior of companies like Creative Associates. In Iraq, any oversight will be by the U.S. occupying authority, whatever that is. General Jay Garner, the potentate set to run Iraq's interim government, is unlikely to be too concerned about what CAII is doing.

With US AID in charge of awarding contracts for school supplies, including textbooks, for Iraq's school system, and Creative Associates, a well-heeled Washington-based company with strong links to Republican freemarketeers in the White House and Congress, likely to play the key role in deciding what to order, Iraqi school children can be expected to receive an education heavily focused on the three Cs: Capitalism, Consumerism and Cheering for America's war on their country.

It will be interesting to see how Creative Associates will handle the all important task of teaching Iraqi children the history of the American invasion and overthrow of their government—in particular how the massive bombardments of Iraqi cities are explained.

It might be instructive to look at the opening line of a manual developed by CAII as part of a terrorism training program the company developed for American businesses. It reads: "Terrorism is violence or the threat of violence intentionally directed against civilians for political reasons. This violence is designed to communicate a message to an audience much larger than the immediate victims of the act."

It's unlikely such a line will appear in any of the students' textbooks. -- *by David Lindorff*

## Santorum: That's Latin for Asshole

Rick Santorum had only been in the senate for a few weeks when Bob Kerrey, then Senator from Nebraska, pegged him. "Santorum, that's Latin for asshole." Such a stew of sleazy self-righteousness and audacious stupidity has not been seen in the senate since the days of Steve Symms, the celebrated moron from Idaho. In 1998, CounterPunch's Ken Silverstein fingered Santorum as the dumbest member of congress against very hot competition.

For years Santorum's staff kept him firmly leashed, rarely permitting him to

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attend a press interview without a senior staffer by his side. They learned the hard way. While serving in the House, Santorum was asked by a reporter to explain why his record on environmental policy was so dreadful. Santorum replied by observing that the environment was of little consequence in God's grand plan. "Nowhere in the Bible does it say that America will be here 100 years from now." The reference was to the Rapture, still out there swirling around Kansas, waiting for The Hour.

But now the Republican leadership, cruising along in self-destruct mode, has elevated Santorum to the number three spot in the senate and his staff can't run interference for him anymore. So it came to pass that on April 7, Santorum sat down for an interview with AP reporter Lara Jordan. He should have been on his guard. After all, Jordan is married to Jim Jordan, who oversees John Kerry's presidential campaign. Kerry's wife, Teresa Heinz, despises Santorum. He inherited the senate seat left open when her previous husband, John Heinz, perished in a plane crash. "Santorum is critical of everything, indifferent to nuance, and incapable of compromise," Heinz said.

This should have been a warning signal to Santorum that the interview with Jordan might be hostile terrain, but his intellectual radar seems to function about as well as Baghdad's air defense system. Postwar, that is.

After a brisk discussion of the degeneracy of American culture, the interview turned to the subject of the pending Supreme Court case on sodomy laws. Santorum pounced on her question with an enthusiasm many Republicans reserve for discussions of the tax code. "I have no problem with homosexuality," Santorum pronounced. "I have a problem with homosexual acts. As I would with acts of other, what I would consider to be, acts outside of traditional heterosexual relationships. And that includes a variety of different acts, not just homosexual. I have nothing, absolutely nothing against anyone who's homosexual. If that's their orientation, then I accept that. And I have no problem with someone who has other orientations."

As the AP reporter gazed raptly at the Senator, scarcely believing her good fortune, Santorum plunged on. " The question is, do you act upon those orientations? So it's not the person, it's the person's actions. And you have to separate the person from their actions."

The AP reporter poked a stick through the cage bars.

AP: "OK, without being too gory or graphic, so if somebody is homosexual, you would argue that they should not have sex?"

SANTORUM: "We have laws in states, like the one at the Supreme Court right now, that [have] sodomy laws and they were there for a purpose. Because, again, I would argue, they undermine the basic tenets of our society and the family. And if the Supreme Court says that you have the right to consensual sex within your home, then you have the right to bigamy, you have the right to polygamy, you have the right to incest, you have the right to adultery. You have the right to anything. Does that undermine the fabric of our society? I would argue yes, it does. It all comes from, I would argue, this right to privacy that doesn't exist in my opinion in the United States Constitution, this right that was created, it was created in Griswold — Griswold was the contraceptive case — and abortion. And now we're just extending it out. And the further you extend it out, the more you — this freedom actually intervenes and affects the family. You say, well, it's my individual freedom. Yes, but it destroys the basic unit of our society because it condones behavior that's antithetical to strong, healthy families. Whether it's polygamy, whether it's adultery, where it's sodomy, all of those things, are antithetical to a healthy, stable, traditional family.

By now Santorum was flying: "Every society in the history of man has upheld the institution of marriage as a bond between a man and a woman. Why? Because society is based on one thing: that society is based on the future of the society. And that's what? Children. Monogamous relationships. In every society, the definition of marriage has not ever to my knowledge included homosexuality. That's not to pick on homosexuality. It's not, you know, man on child, man on dog, or whatever the case may be. It is one thing. And when you destroy that you have a dramatic impact on the quality."

Another poke of the stick from AP: "I'm sorry. I didn't think I was going to talk about 'man on dog' with a United States senator, it's sort of freaking me out."

But Santorum was running out of steam: "And that's sort of where we are in today's world, unfortunately. The idea is that the state doesn't have rights to limit individuals' wants and passions. I disagree with that. I think we absolutely have rights because there are consequences to letting people live out whatever wants or passions they desire. And we're seeing it in our society."

Bush stood by Santorum: "The president believes the senator is an inclusive man," Ari Fleischer informed the press. "And that's what he believes." Santorum's pal Tom Delay, the pest exterminator-turned-Republican House Majority Leader, was ebullient. He called Santorum's remarks "courageous."

***Santorum, the Mullah Omar of Pennsylvania, was once a lobbyist for the World Wrestling Federation.***

Santorum, the Mullah Omar of Pennsylvania, is a ridiculous spectacle but he can't be taken lightly. He is the slick-haired darling of the neo-cons, an obedient automaton that feverishly promotes their wildest fantasies without hesitation. Undeterred by the First Amendment, Santorum says he's planning to introduce legislation that will limit criticism of Israel in colleges and universities that receive federal money. We always thought that was where the whole "hate speech" drive might end up.

When it comes to the Middle East, liberal Democrats race to co-sponsor legislation with him. Most recently, Santorum and Barbara Boxer teamed up to introduce the Syria Accountability Act, which would inflict trade sanctions on Syria like those which gripped Iraq for 12 years, killing nearly one million children. Talk about family values.

Sure, Santorum is an asshole. But he's not one of a kind. CP

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(**War***continued from page 1*)

of the pre-bombing level, with consequences for hospitals and water-pumping systems that can be all too readily imagined.

Many of the contracts vetoed at the insistence of the US by the Sanctions Committee were integral to the repair of water and sewage systems. By some estimates, the bombings from the Gulf War inflicted nearly $200 billion worth of damage to the civilian infrastructure of Iraq. "Basically, anything with chemicals or even pumps is liable to get thrown out," one UN official revealed.

The sanctions, then, served as a pretext to bring this hidden war home to the Iraqi people, to "soften them up" from the inside, as one Pentagon official put it. The same trend was apparent in the power supply sector, where around 25 percent of the contracts were vetoed. This meant not only homes were without power, but also hospitals, schools, the infrastructure of everyday life.

But even this doesn't tell the whole story. UN officials referred to the "complementarity issue," meaning that items approved for purchase would be useless without other items that had been vetoed. For example, (as CounterPunch reported at the time) the Iraqi Ministry of Health ordered $25 million worth of dentist chairs. This order was approved by the sanctions committee, except for the compressors, without which the chairs were useless and consequently gathered dust in a Baghdad warehouse.

These vetoes served as a constant harassment, even over petty issues. In February 2000, the US moved to prevent Iraq from importing 15 bulls from France. The excuse was that the animals, ordered with the blessing of the UN's humanitarian office in Baghdad to try to restock the Iraqi beef industry, would require certain vaccines which (who knows) might be diverted into a program to make biological weapons of mass destruction.

For sheer sadistic bloody-mindedness, however, the interdiction of the bulls pales beside an initiative of the British government, which banned the export of vaccines for tetanus, diphtheria and yellow fever on the grounds that they too might find their way into the hands of Saddam's biological weaponeers. It has been the self-exculpatory mantra of US and British officials that "food and medicine are exempt from sanctions." As the vaccine ban shows, this, like so many other pronouncements on Iraq, turns out to be a lie.

Indeed, the sanctions policy was always marked by acts of captious cruelty. Since 1991, the US and Britain slapped their veto on requests by Iraq for: infant food; ping pong balls; NCR computers for children's hospitals for blood analysis; heaters; insecticide; syringes; bicycles; nail polish and lipstick; tennis balls, children's clothes, pencil sharpeners and school notebooks; cotton balls and swabs; hospital and ambulance radios and pagers; and shroud material.

## Part Two

The prolonged onslaught on the Iraqi people by the sanctions did not mean that direct military attack stopped in March of 1991. Indeed, though it received scant attention in the press, Iraq was hit with bombs or missiles an average of every three days since the cease-fire that purportedly signaled the end of the first Gulf War. Its feeble air defense system was shattered and its radars jammed and bombed; its air force was grounded, the runways of its airports repeatedly cratered; its Navy, primitive to begin with, was destroyed. The nation's northern and southern territories were occupied by hostile forces, armed, funded and overseen by the CIA.

Every bit of new construction in the country was scrutinized for any possible military function by satellite cameras capable of zooming down to a square meter. Truck and tank convoys were zealously monitored. Troop locations were pinpointed. Its bunkers were mapped, the coordinates programmed into the targeting software for bunker-busting bombs.

Iraq after the Gulf War wasn't a rogue state. It was a captive state. This daily military harassment was the normal state of play, but there were also more robust displays of power. In June of 1993, Bill Clinton okayed a cruise missile strike on Baghdad, supposedly in response to a alleged and certainly bungled bid by Iraqi agents to assassinate George Bush the first on his triumphal tour of Kuwait.

Twenty-three cruise missiles were launched on Baghdad from two aircraft carriers in the Persian Gulf. With deadly imprecision, 8 of the missiles hit a residential suburb of Baghdad, killing dozens of civilians, including one of Iraq's leading artists , Leila al-Attar.

Then in December of 1998, another raid on Baghdad was launched, slated to divert attention from the House of Representatives' vote on the question of Clinton's impeachment. This time more than 100 missiles rained down on Baghdad, Mosul, Tikrit and Basra, killing hundreds. Clinton's chief pollster, Stan Greenberg, imparted the welcome news that the bombings had caused Clinton's poll numbers to jump by 11 points. When in doubt, bomb Iraq.

***In 1989 the infant mortality rate had gone from 47 per 1000 in 1989 to 108 per 1000 in 1996. By 1996 the death count was running at 5,000 children a month.***

The message was not lost on Bush. In late February of 2001, less than a month into office, Bush let fly with two dozen cruise missiles on Baghdad, a strike that Donald Rumsfeld described as an "act of protective retaliation." Alongside these attacks the CIA was busy sponsoring assassination bids and, with sometimes comical inefficiency, trying to mount coups against Saddam Hussein.

After five years of sanctions Iraq was in desperate straits. The hospitals filled with dying children, and necessary medicines to save them banned by the US officials in New York supervising the operations of the sanctions committee. Half a million children had died in the time span. The mortality rates were soaring with terrifying speed. In 1989 the infant mortality rate had gone from 47 per 1000 in 1989 to 108 per 1000 in 1996. For kids under five the rate was even worse, from 56 per 1000 in 1989 to 131 per 1000 in 1996. By 1996 the death count was running at 5,000 chil-

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dren a month, to which Madeleine Albright made the infamous comment, that "we think the price is worth it."

## Part Three

One might think this carefully planned and deadly onslaught on a civilian population, year after year, surely was retribution enough for Saddam's invasion of Kuwait. But what allowed the ultra-hawks in Washington to press for another hot war on Iraq was Saddam's personal survival as Iraqi dictator. Though the aims of the war party were much broader, the brazen survival of Saddam was always the pretext.

On July 8, 1996 the Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies sent a strategy memo to Israel's new prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. Grandly titled "A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm", (the realm in this instance being Israel) the memorandum had among its sponsors several notorious Washington characters, some of them accused more than once down the years of being agents of influence for Israel, including them Richard Perle and Douglas Feith.

Among the recommendations for Netanyahu were these:

"roll-back some of [Israel's] most dangerous threats. This implies a clean break from the slogan 'comprehensive peace' to a traditional concept of strategy based on balance of power...

"Change the nature of [Israel's] relations with the Palestinians, including upholding the right of hot pursuit for self defense into all Palestinian areas...

"Israel can shape its strategic environment, in cooperation with Turkey and Jordan, by weakening, containing, and even rolling back Syria. This effort can focus on removing Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq--an important Israeli strategic objective in its own right--as a means of foiling Syria's regional ambitions."

Within a few short months this strategy paper for Netanyahu was being recycled through the agency of a Washington bucket shop called the Project for a New American Century, which was convened by William Kristol with infusions of cash from the rightwing Bradley Foundation.

The PNAC became a roosting spot for a retinue of DC neocons, headlined by Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney and Paul Wolfowitz. On the eve of Clinton's 1998 State of the Union address, Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz sent Clinton a letter on PNAC stationary urging the president to radically overhaul US policy toward Iraq.

Instead of the slow squeeze of sanction, Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz declared that it was time for Saddam to be forcibly evicted and Iraq reconstructed along lines favorable to US and Israeli interests. The UN be damned. "We are writing you because we are convinced that current American policy toward Iraq is not succeeding, and that we may soon face a threat in the Middle East more serious than any we have known since the end of the Cold War," the letter blared. "In your upcoming State of the Union Address, you have an opportunity to chart a clear and determined course for meeting this threat. We urge you to seize that opportunity, and to enunciate a new strategy that would secure the interests of the U.S. and our friends and allies around the world. That strategy should aim, above all, at the removal of Saddam Hussein's regime from power....American policy cannot continue to be crippled by a misguided insistence on unanimity in the UN Security Council."

In all likelihood, the strategy outlined in the letter was aimed not at Clinton, the lame-duck, but at Gore, who Wolfowitz, Rumsfeld et al. believed might be more receptive to this rhetoric. They had reason for hope. One of the PNAC's members was James Woolsey, former CIA head and longtime Gore adviser on intelligence and military matters.

And it worked. As the campaign season rolled into action Gore began to distance himself from Clinton on Iraq. He embraced the corrupt Ahmad Chalabi and his Iraqi National Congress, indicted the Bush family for being soft on Saddam and called for regime topple.

Had Gore been elected he likely would have stepped up the tempo of military strikes on Iraq within weeks of taking office.

## Part Four

After seizing power, the Bush crowd didn't wait long to draw Iraqi blood. Less than a month after taking office, cruise missiles pummeled Baghdad, killing dozens of civilians. Then came the attacks of 9/11. Just hours into that day of disaster, Rumsfeld convened a meeting in the war room. He commanded his aides to get "best info fast. Judge whether good enough hit S.H."—meaning Saddam Hussein— "at same time. Not only UBL"—the initials used to identify Osama bin Laden. "Go massive." Notes taken by these aides quote him as saying. "Sweep it all up. Things related and not." The notes were uncovered by David Martin of CBS News.

***Rumsfeld convened a meeting in the war room. He commanded his aides to get "best info fast. Judge whether good enough hit S.H."—meaning Saddam Hussein— "at same time."***

The preparations for overthrowing Saddam began that day, under the pretense that Saddam was somehow connected to Bin Laden's Wahabbite kamikazes. Rumsfeld knew then the connection was illusory and despite lots of bluster and digging it didn't became any more substantial over the next year and a half.

In the months that preceded the second "hot" war, ignited on March 19, 2003, many a theory was advanced for the prime motive of the war party: was it the plan of the pro-Israel neocon hawks; was it all about oil and (a subvariant) because Saddam was insisting on being paid for his oil in euros; was it, in the wake of 9/11, about a peremptory message about US power (this is the current White House favorite); was it essentially a subject change from the domestic economic slump?

The answer is the essentially

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unconspiratorial one that it was a mix. Bush's initial policy in his first fumbling months in office was far from the chest-pounding stance of implacable American might it became after 9/11 changed the rule book. 9/11 is what gave the neocons their chance, and allowed them to push forward and eventually trump the instincts of a hefty chunk of the political and corporate elites.

For many of these elites, the survival of Saddam Hussein was a small blip on the radar screen. Here's a useful resume of what preoccupied these elites from Jeffrey Garten, who was Clinton's first undersecretary of commerce for international trade, writing in Business Week:

"The biggest issues the Administration faced were not military in nature but competition with Japan and Europe, financial crises in Latin America and Asia, negotiations over the North American Trade Agreement, and the establishment of the World Trade Organization and China's entrance into it. In Washington's eyes, the policies of the IMF, the World Bank, and the WTO were bigger issues than the future of NATO. The opening of Japan's markets was more critical than its military posture in Asia. The ratings that Standard & Poor's gave to Indonesia was of greater significance than sending our military advisers there. We pushed deregulation and privatization. We mounted massive trade missions to help U.S. companies win big contracts in emerging markets. Strengthening economic globalization became the organizing principle for most of our foreign policy. And American corporations were de facto partners all along the way."

That's a fair account of how the agenda looks, from the imperial battlements. Run the show as best you can, but don't rock the boat more than you have to. Acting too blatantly as prime world gangster, 'dissing the Security Council, roiling the Arab world, prompting popular upheavals in Turkey, all counted as boat-rocking on a dangerous scale.

By the end of half a year's national debate on the utility of attacking Iraq, business leaders were still chewing their finger nails and trembling at the economic numbers; the New York Times was against war and George Jr had lost the support of his father, who issued a distinct rebuke during a question and answer session at Tufts in mid-spring. George Senior's closest associates, James Baker and Brent Scowcroft similarly expressed disagreement.

But against this opposition, domestic political factors proved paramount and overwhelming. The post-9/11 climate offers the American right its greatest chance since the first days of the Reagan administration, maybe even since the early 1950s to set in blood and stone its core agenda: untrammeled exercise of power overseas, and at home roll-back of all liberal gains since the start of the New Deal. And not just that, but an opportunity too to make a lasting dent in the purchase on Jewish support and money held since Truman by the Democratic Party.

## Part Five

These are the prizes and so it was never in doubt, since the morning hours of 9/11, that the Bush regime would attack Iraq and bring home the head of… no, not Saddam, who may now be putting up his Vargas drawings in some motel in Minsk.

What the Bush regime needed and got, was not the head, but the image of the head, wrapped in the US flag. That came with the images of Iraqis (actually a small knot of Chalabi's supporters plus some journalists) cheering US troops in the Baghdad square in front of the Palestine Hotel on April 9 as they hauled down Saddam's statue in one small portion of that square, itself sealed off by three US tanks. Online CounterPunchers can go to www.counterpunch.org/statue.html and see for themselves.) As for the looting, it's entirely in character for US planners to have had plans for the "attrition of Iraqi national self-esteem" but also we wouldn't discount local initiative, probably with inside help, in looting the archaeological museum and the national library.

The non-discovery of the Weapons of Mass Destruction has become a huge embarrassment for both Bush and Blair. The Sunday's British Independent carried the following huge frontpage banner headlines two weeks ago: "SO WHERE ARE THEY, MR BLAIR? NOT ONE ILLEGAL WARHEAD. NOT ONE DRUM OF CHEMICALS. NOT ONE INCRIMINATING DOCUMENT. NOT ONE SHRED OF EVIDENCE THAT IRAQ HAS WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION IN MORE THAN A MONTH OF WAR AND OCCUPATION."

CounterPunch tends to agree with the assessment of the Russian commentator "Venik" who remarked when the "hot war" was over (at last temporarily, and excluding summary and ongoing shootings of Iraqis) that, as in the initial US engagement in Afghanistan, the prime US weapon of mass destruction was the dollar.

We have read many highly detailed accounts of how, in the first week of April, the impending siege of Baghdad turned into a cakewalk, and though we don't believe most of those details, we do agree that there were some big pay-offs and US guarantees of assisted flight.

Indeed here at CounterPunch we wonder whether some of those billion dollar stashes found by US troops in Baghdad were not US pay-off money that speeded the departure of the Republican Guards' commanders, duly followed by the defection of the prudent troops.

Iraq's thirteen years' war is not over. That's obvious enough, and we expect many long years of travail and struggle lie ahead for those millions of people in the cradle of civilization. We will report on them to the best of our ability. CounterPunchers should not neglect, in pondering those thirteen years, the fact that US officials spent years knowingly making decisions that spelled certain death to hundreds of thousands of the poorest Iraqi civilians, the bulk of them children. CP

***Iraq's thirteen years' war is not over. That's obvious enough, and we expect many long years of travail and struggle lie ahead for those millions of people in the cradle of civilization.***

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# Patriot Gore:

## *the Fatal Flaws in the Patriot Missile*

### BY JEFFREY ST. CLAIR

This time around it was going to be different. This time around the Patriot missile was going to live up to all the hype, unlike in the first installment of the Gulf War when the missiles nearly struck out against Iraqi Scuds, the softballs of the ballistic missile world.

There was a lot riding on the Patriot missile system's success. Not just the safety of American and British troops and journalists or Kuwaitis and Israelis, who fear they might have been targets of Iraqi Scud missiles (assuming the regime had any left.) The new and improved Patriot missile also was going to demonstrate the efficacy of the Bush administration's mad rush to deploy a revamped Ballistic Missile Defense System, the Star Wars of Reagan's fantasy. Billions in defense contracts were riding on the backs of those missile batteries.

As in the first Gulf War, the initial reports on the new Patriots were breathlessly glowing. As missile sirens went off in Kuwait, embedded reporters ritually donned their chemical gas masks, descended into bunkers, then emerged minutes later to announce that they'd been saved by the mighty Patriot missile.

The mobile missile batteries supposedly knocked down several Iraqi Scuds headed toward US Army positions and Kuwait City. Later, it turned out that the missiles weren't Scuds and they may have been brought down in the Kuwait desert on their own volition not by US missiles.

Then came the really bad news. On March 24, a Patriot missile battery near the Kuwait border locked onto a British Royal Air Force Tornado G-4 jet that was returning from a raid on Basra. Four Patriot missiles were fired and one hit the jet, destroying the plane and killing two British pilots.

Two days later, the radar for another Patriot missile battery locked onto a US F-16. The pilot of fighter jet located the radar dish and destroyed it. Then on April 2 an U.S. Navy F/A-18 Hornet was shot down by another Patriot missile, killing the pilot.

"They're looking into a software problem," said Navy Lt. Commander Charles Owens. "They're going to check everything out. When they do find a fault, they'll put it out to the rest of the world."

But Pentagon watchers aren't holding their breath. Based on past experience, it's more likely that Pentagon brass will attempt to obscure the cause rather than reveal a fatal design flaw in a revered centerpiece in the Army's new arsenal of smart weapons.

Indeed, there's plenty of evidence that the Pentagon and the Patriot's contractors (Raytheon and Lockheed) have known for nearly a decade that the missile has difficulties discriminating incoming missiles from friendly aircraft.

The target discrimination problem was first revealed during testing at Nellis Air Force Base in 1993. During that test an U.S. aircraft simulating a return home from a mission was flying in a corridor reserved for friendly aircraft but still would have been "shot down" by the Patriot were it a combat situation.

Over the years, billions were poured into the program with little sign of improvement in this fundamental and lethal defect. Subsequent exercises and tests have revealed that the Patriot radar discrimination problems were not fixed, according to Philip Coyle, former Director, Operational Test and Evaluation, the Pentagon's independent testing office. Coyle says the problems were identified in so-called Joint Air Defense Operations/Joint Engagement Zones exercises during the mid-1990s.

Despite this, the Pentagon pushed to increase production of the Patriot III in the months leading up to the invasion of Iraq. In November of 2002, Lt. Gen. Ronald Kadish, the head of the Pentagon's Missile Defense Agency, told Congress that the Army needed to dramatically step up production of the new Patriots, not only for use in Iraq but also "to counter threats in North Korea, Iran and Libya."

"My recommendation is to buy PAC-3s as fast as we are able to buy them," Kadish said. When asked about problems with the system, Kadish brushed them off, saying they were merely "minor" and "annoying" glitches. Congress, ever anxious to peddle Pentagon pork, consented, boosting Patriot missile production by more than 10 percent.

As usual with the Pentagon, cost is no object. But the Patriot is very expensive system and it's getting costlier all the time. Raytheon and Lockheed originally promised to deliver the new Patriot system for $3.7 billion dollars. Now the cost has soared to $7.8 billion. Each Patriot missile unit costs about $170 million. In the first Gulf War, an average of four missiles were launched against a single incoming Scud.

The old PAC-2 is seriously flawed. But the new version of the Patriot has struggled through field testing, although this didn't deter the Pentagon's rush to increase production. Through the summer of 2002, the new Patriot missile had failed more than half of its field tests.

From the beginning there were signs of serious glitches in the software program that guides the missile. The program was two years behind schedule and the costs soared from $557 million to $1.1 billion for the software alone. And it's still never worked right. By 2001, the cost overruns for the system had topped $10 million a month.

You simply can't trust the Pentagon to be honest about the performance of its big ticket items. During the first Gulf War, the generals crowed about the success of the Patriot, saying that it hit more than 80 percent of its targets. In fact, the missile scarcely hit any incoming missiles, as was revealed in a General Accounting Office investigation. The GAO audit concluded that the Patriot missiles hit less than 9 percent of the Iraqi Scud missiles that were launched during the first Gulf conflict.

"The results of these studies are disturbing," said Theodore Postol, the MIT scientist who studied the Patriot missile's kill rate in the first Gulf War. "They suggest that the Patriot's intercept rate during the Gulf War was very low. The evidence from these preliminary studies indicates that the Patriot's intercept rate could be much lower than 10 percent, perhaps even zero." The Pentagon went after Postol with a vengeance, accusing him of using classified documents for his conclusions on the ineptitude of the Patriot missile system.

What's more disturbing is that the Pentagon knew all this and covered it up. So did the Patriot's prime contractor, Raytheon. In the immediate aftermath of the Gulf War, the US Army issued two

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(**Dems** *continued fromn page 1)*

amounts and that indeed many powerful Jews view his candidacy with disfavor on the grounds he's an unconvincing candidate, positioned way too far to the right to be viable in the primaries.

Firmly antiwar were one white, Rep Dennis Kucinich, and two blacks, the Rev Al Sharpton and former US Senator Carol Mosely Braun.

Howard Dean, former governor of Vermont, now vying with Kucinich for the progressive crowd, stood by his position that any attack on Iraq should have the explicit blessing of the UN Security Council.

This keeps him in good odor with the pwog crowd, but at the same time Dean covered his flank from charges of being a peacenik by announcing at an April 9 private session of the Alliance for American Leadership that he endorses the Clinton policy of "constructive engagement", meaning lip-service to international institutions like the UN or NATO, sanctions and in the end, the same missiles and bombers used by George Bush. Remember, Clinton's attack on Yugoslavia, accompanied by much the same rhetoric as the Bush strike on Iraq, was not endorsed by the UN, only by NATO.

Dean's prime foreign policy adviser is Danny Seabright, who works for the Cohen Group, a consulting outfit run by William Cohen, the former Republican senator from Maine who was Clinton's secretary of defense. Seabright's bureaucratic genes trace back to the Defense Intelligence Agency; thereafter to the DoD's Policy Executive Secretariat, where he was overseeing the war in Afghanistan till the end of 2002.

As Seabright's bio on the Cohen Group's website proclaims: "Mr Seabright cultivated extensive contacts with US and foreign defense industry officials to coordinate and implement DoD weapons sales to Israel and many countries in the Middle East."

Dean, as diligent as Bill Clinton in catering to all the usual lobbies, has a markedly hawkish position on Israel. One of his closest advisers and chief fundraiser is Massachusetts-based Stephen Grossman, former head of AIPAC and former chair of the DNC.

Asked by The Forward (indispensable reading when it comes to Israel-related matters and attitudes of Jewish-American groups) what significance should be attached to his appearance at a Peace Now event where he was handing out an award, Dean responded, "At one time the Peace Now view was important, but now Israel is under enormous pressure. We have to stop terrorism before peace negotiations. I don't do things for political reasons. I'm very loyal to my friends. No one should read anything into my ideology. No, my view is closer to AIPAC's view."

In other words, if Bush's Roadmap to Peace ever sets a signpost towards an end to new Israeli settlements, Dean stands poised to attack Bush from the right.

Anyone entertaining any illusions that Dean is prepared even at this early stage to offer any policy alternative substantively different to that now being carried out under the Neocon program should study Dean's ensuing remarks to E.J. Kessler of Forward: "One of my foreign policy goals is to bring democracy and freedom to Muslim nations. We can only do that with cooperation. Half of the Muslim world would not support Osama bin Laden if Arab and Muslim regimes were not so oppressive. The United States has to take a much harder line on Iran and Saudi Arabia because they're funding terrorism. We need conservation and renewable energy to lessen our dependence on Mideast oil and to have a lever on the funders of terror."

Aside from the reference to conservation, these pearls could have fallen straight from the lips of Paul Wolfowitz.

CounterPunchers may ask: Does Dean balance this utterly orthodox hawkishness overseas with a progressive domestic program of economic renewal? No, he does not. Accurately resuming his conduct of Vermont's budgetary affairs during his tenure of the governorship through the 1990s, Dean proclaims that he's a fiscal conservative and budget balancer.

Need more? Well, he did win the hearts of Vermont's progressives by defending same sex civil unions in that state, at a time when a right-wing Christian without much hope of election was threatening this legal privilege of same sexers in the green mountain state. Balanced budget and full court press for the gay vote: remind you of anyone? And yes, Gov Dean is fully death-qualified,

(**Dems** *continued on page 11)*

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*(***Patriot** *continued from page 8)*

assessments on the Patriot missile system's performance: one on Patriot Scud kills in Israel and another in Saudi Arabia. Initially, the Pentagon claimed a success rate of 80 percent in Saudi Arabia and 50 percent in Israel. A few months later, the Pentagon scaled those back to 70 percent and 40 percent. A year later, the Pentagon admitted that it had a high degree of confidence in only "ten percent" of the kills.

Why the slow comedown? American wars have served as live fire arms shows. The hype on the Patriot, which the US media eagerly gobbled up, was designed to help market the missile system to other nations. In the immediate aftermath of the first Gulf War, more than a dozen nations placed orders for Patriot missile systems. The contracts were signed before the purchasers (including Turkey, South Korea, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia) learned of the Patriot's weak batting average.

There were lethal consequences to the Patriot's failures during the first Gulf War, which the Pentagon glossed over. On February 25, 1991, a Patriot missile battery in Dharan, Saudi Arabia missed an incoming Iraqi Scud. The Scud hit an Army barrack housing US soldiers. The rocket attack killed 28 people and injured more than 100 others.

The Patriot missile is based on 1970s technology and was originally designed for use as an anti-aircraft weapon, a role it reverted to with tragic consequences in the latest Gulf War. In the 1980s, the Patriot was modified to serve as anti-ballistic missile system for use against short-range rocket attacks.

"The Pentagon has known for a decade that the Patriot cannot distinguish its targets from our own aircraft," says Danielle Brian, Executive Director of the Project on Government Oversight, a Pentagon watchdog group. "It is an outrage that they have not fixed this fundamental flaw, yet continue to buy it and sell it to our allies. They have the gall to promote this weapon in both Gulf Wars as a star when they've known it is a dud." CP

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# The Iraq Money Pot

## By Dave Lindorff

A little money goes a long way in the war profiteering business and war profiteering is the name of the game in post-war Iraq.

Long before the bombs started dropping in Baghdad, some well-connected companies that wanted a piece of the reconstruction action were dropping bundles of cash on the Republican Party and on George W. Bush's campaign committee.

According to the Center for Responsive Politics, which tracks such things, five big winners in the rigged game of getting contracts in Iraq, between 1999 and 2002, gave a total of $3.6 million in campaign donations. Two-thirds of that money went to Republicans, with the rest going to the right-wing Democratic Leadership Council crowd.

According to the center's website (www.capitaleye.org), the biggest donor among that group—and the biggest winner so far in the Iraq "reconstruction" contracts business—is the Bechtel Group, Inc. This San Francisco-based company, which has close ties to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and the Bush family, as well as many other revolving-door connections to the White House and the Pentagon (US Agency for International Development Administrator Andrew Natsios, who oversees the awarding of post-war contracts, earlier oversaw the "Big Dig" tunnel project in Boston, for which Bechtel was the prime contractor), has already won an Iraq reconstruction contract worth up to $680 million. Even if Bechtel didn't win more of the estimated $20 billion per year in reconstruction contracts still to be awarded, $680 million in return for Bechtel's campaign contribution of $1.3 million (59 percent, or $770,000 of which, went to the Republican Party and G.W. Bush) represents a remarkable 99.8 return on their investment!

It's hard to know what the rate of return will be on Halliburton's contracts in Iraq. That's because the contract awarded to this well-connected Dallas-based oil-services and construction company to rebuild Iraq's war and sanctions-devastated oil industry is open-ended. Halliburton, besides donating $709,000, 95 percent of it to Republicans, between 1999 and 2002, was run by Vice President Dick Cheney until his election, and the secretive VP still collects some $1 million a year form the company while hiding out at his undisclosed locations (his blind trust still includes a big chunk of Halliburton stock, too). While Halliburton discreetly removed itself from the bidding for Iraq reconstruction contracts because of the firm's ties to the Bush Administration, the huge oil industry contract was awarded to a Halliburton subsidiary, Kellogg, Brown & Root.

Halliburton will be in Iraq in another hidden guise, too. That's because Halliburton will be a principal subcontractor of Parsons, another major contractor in the running for Iraq rebuilding contracts. Parsons gave $249,000 in campaign contributions over the pre-war period examined by the Center for Responsive Politics, 63 percent of it to Republicans.

Another big winner in the Iraq rebuilding sweepstakes is the Fluor Corp., another California-based company which gave a whopping $483,000 in campaign contributions, 43 percent of that amount to Republicans.

The other big winner which was also a heavy contributor to the GOP and the Bush campaign was Stevadore Services of America, which won a $4.8 million initial contract to start rebuilding the Umm Qasr port facilities in Iraq, and which gave $28,000 in campaign contributions, 80 percent to Republicans.

The Bush Administration has conceded that the bidding for the first round of Iraq reconstruction contracts, worth a total of some $1 billion, was "restricted" to certain companies (all foreign-owned companies were excluded, even including British firms), ostensibly for reasons of "national security." So far, despite protests from Britain and other countries, these restrictive bidding rules are expected to continue in place.

But particularly with the war largely over, the national security argument rings increasingly hollow. The close alignment between campaign contributions and contract awards offers a much more convincing explanation for the tightly controlled bidding process.

It also raises disturbing questions about the level of damage caused by American bombs. After all, the damage to Iraqi infrastructure represents a payback for campaign contributions made by firms eager for the contracts to rebuild that same damage.

***While a compliant and complicit Congress cannot be expected to delve into these kinds of issues, Bechtel, Halliburton, Fluor and others would do well to grab as much of the reconstruction funding as they can get up front. If the Shi'a seize control of Iraq, they may boot them out.***

While a compliant and complicit Congress cannot be expected to delve into these kinds of issues, Bechtel, Halliburton, Fluor and others would do well to grab as much of the reconstruction funding as they can get up front. The way things are going in Iraq, with Shiite clergy moving into positions of political power, many of those contracts may quickly go the way of Enron's corruption-plagued Dabhol Power Plant in India, which was cancelled after a new party took power in Maharashtra state and Enron's links to the corrupt prior state government were exposed.

*David Lindorff is the author of Killing Time, a book about the Mumia Abu-Jamal case.*

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pronouncing his support for the final sanction, in the case of child murderers and cop killers.

We will say that Dean has shown himself more than once to be resilient in the facing of bullying interrogations by such froth-flecked guardians of the Bush Doctrine as Tim Russert of NBC and Wolf Blitzer of CNN. In a bout with the latter amidst the warwhoops of American triumph, Dean remarked to Blitzer that it was too soon to tell whether Iraqis were better off, now that Saddam has quit the scene.

Scenting blood, Blitzer pounced on the remark, tossing it up in the air, catching it in his jaws and pummelling Dean with "Surely you don't mean…" Dean stood his ground, responding levelly, "We don't know that yet, Wolf. We still have a country whose capital city is mostly without electricity. We have tumultuous occasions in the south where there is no clear governance. We see chaos in Baghdad… And this is going to go on and on."

Every candidate has his favorite president. Dean's? He has two: Truman, the creator of the National Security State and Jimmy Carter. A careful mix, like everything else Dean concocts: prudence mingled with caution. Hey, how else do you get the Democratic nomination?

The logic of Dean's position is that if the UN Security Council had approved, war would have been justified. By contrast Rep Dennis Kucinich has always taken the position, as has the Rev Al Sharpton, that the UN Inspectors should have been allowed to do their work. In consequence, across the past few weeks, Kucinich's new minted candidacy for the nomination has flourished among the white left. Barbara Ehrenreich and Marcus Raskin, both with solid credentials when it comes to issuing Democratic candidates with visas to campaign for the left vote, have issued an urgent advisory to the left that Kucinich Is The One, the best hope for progressives, a rallying point for those who might have given up on the Democratic Party.

Kucinich himself issues the same appeal. He recently told the Cleveland Plain Dealer, "The Democratic Party created third parties by running to the middle. What I'm trying to do is to go back to the big tent so that everyone who felt alienated could come back through my candidacy."

Aside from the backing from Ehrenreich, Raskin and the Institute for Policy Studies which is writing many of his position papers, Kucinich has backing from a slice of liberal Hollywood, in the form of Peter Coyote and Lindsay Wagner, the Bionic Woman.

As an aspirant for the nomination, Kucinich is in the odd position of having come back from the dead even before he declared himself a candidate. Six months ago his long-standing opposition to abortion seemed an insuperable barrier. Katha Pollitt wrote as much in her Nation column.

Kucinich, like Gore before him, duly finessed his position by saying that his personal antipathy to abortion would not stand in the way of his appointing pro-choice justices, and like manner heeding to the concerns of the pro-choice lobby. This hasty bargain with his principles got him into progressive good odor, though it has left a certain residue of concern that he might prove similarly ductile in amending other principles. It was Gore's "flexibility" after all, that sent so many into the Greens in 2000.

Among Kucinich's Hollywood supporters is Shirley MacLaine, an old friend who's godmother to Kucinich's daughter. MacLaine is most definitely in Hollywood's New Age quadrant, high priestess in the groves of wu-wu, with political obsessions mulched with conspiracies such as the official suppression of evidence about UFOs and chemtrails.

MacLaine introduced Kucinich to Chris Griscom, a New Age high priestess from Galisteo, New Mexico's answer to Delphi. Griscom's website pipes her institute as "an enchanting center for spiritual healing and multi-incarnational explorations." Kucinich has spent time at Galisteo, no doubt exploring itineraries for campaign trips to the age of Akhnaten and Atlantis.

In New Mexico Kucinich met up with another big name on the New Age circuit, in the form of Marianne Williamson, the (extremely attractive) spiritual guru to out-there Hollywood stars. Williamson dispenses a conflation of Tibetan Buddhism, Christianity and self-realisation and has exercised a powerful influence on the vegetarian congressman from Ohio.

Williamson's group, the Global Renaissance Alliance, inspired Kucinich to make his prime plank The Department of Peace, which in CounterPunch's opinion is a pretty silly idea. Better he campaign to have the DoD renamed the War Department, which is what it was until 1949. The way things are in Washington, any Department of Peace would soon be awash with Arms Control types from Brookings, then probably captured by Special Forces from the National Endowment for Democracy, doomed to spend the rest of its days dispensing research grants to Freedom House, CSIS and maybe once in a blue moon, IPS.

Of course Kucinich has a perfect right to make regular pilgrimages to Galisteo and as a political counsellor Williamson is certainly more appealing than Karl Rove or Bob Shrum, who has already skipped camp from John Edwards of North Carolina to Bob Kerry of Massachusetts and the deep pockets of Mrs Kerry, the ci-devant Teresa Heinz. But those who remember how Jerry Brown, now rehabbing himself as the Richard Daley of the Port of Oakland, was once derided as Governor Moonbeam just for boosting solar energy and partying with Linda Ronstadt, can easily imagine how Kucinich would get torn in pieces by the jackals of the Fourth Estate if he was ever to become a serious contender.

But in CounterPunch's judgement,


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Kucinich hasn't a prayer of becoming a serious contender and we are amazed to see people like Ehrenreich acting as the Pied Piper, calling all the erstwhile Greens, the Natural Law Party and other exiles back under the Big Top. Kucinich has no money, no name recognition and didn't do any of the advance legwork that Dean embarked on long ago. No doubt people like John Cavanagh of IPS will write him some nice economic strategy programs or simply rehab the ones they wrote for Jesse Jackson in 1984 and 1988, or take over the ones Ralph Nader issued in 2000, but even now Kucinich isn't identified with any strong campaign plank beyond the Peace Department caper.

This is sad. Kucinich is a good fellow, not compromised as is Gephardt by decades of politicking and deal-making on the Hill, not an opportunist like Edwards, not a glass-jawed mini-Kennedy like Kerry. Kucinich is relatively young, but has been through the mill, ever since his debut as mayor of Cleveland in the late 1970s when he defended Cleveland's municipal power plant and was ground under by the business powers of the city in a battle should have given him special vindication today. Furthermore Kucinich comes from the industrial midwest, which has been pulverized by the recession.

But so far as we can tell, he's not built a grassroots political base and the necessary architects for this task aren't all located in southern California and New Mexico.

Kucinich is no opportunist, but we can't say the same for those who see his candidacy as a come-along to haul people back into the Democratic Party. Here we are, just under a year away from the first primaries and already orders to march in lockstep are being issued. Take Marty Jezer, a well-known pwog Vermont journalist who writes a weekly column in the Brattleboro Reformer. Jezer has always held the position that the left was irresponsible in not rallying to Hubert Humphrey in 1968. Last week Jezer announced that "a Third Party presidential challenge from the left would be reactionary and traitorous in the 2004 election."

The same sentiments have been put forth by Moveon.org, the promoters of Win Without War, a left-front for the Democratic Party.

There's a current across the entire liberal left, exercising a powerful pull on people to unite to put out George Bush. This is understandable. Bush is awful, far more so than anticipated. Ashcroft is awful. Rumsfeld is awful. The Bush crowd has used 9/11 as the lever to put through a truly nightmarish political agenda both at home and overseas.

But does that mean that in the spring of 2003 everyone across the left/green/anti-Democratic Party spectrum has to hunker down and pledge support now for any and every Democratic candidate, like Dean whose economic program is wholeheartedly reactionary and whose foreign policy is only a few scant degrees athwart that of Bush? Or John Kerry who applauded the war?

Here we are in a world, half of whose population of six billion lives on less than $2 a day. At home the economy teeters on the edge of long-term recession. A dip in the housing market and it'll be a fast downhill slide. We've barely heard a single Democratic candidate address any major problem with anything other than rote rhetoric, though Dick Gephardt has come out with a health plan that deserves discussion. "Traitorous" to call for a few new ideas? We don't think so. CP

***There's a current across the entire liberal left, excercising a powerful pull on people to unite to put out George Bush. This is understandable. Bush is awful, far more so than anticipated. Ashcroft is awful. But does that mean it's treasonous not to support any Democrat that gets the nomination? Hardly.***

**CounterPunch**
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***You Mean, Now We Have to Promise to be Good Democrats Forever?***

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